



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

Pursuant to section 4(e) of the United Nations Participation Act, 22 U.S.C. 287b(e), and the Department of State and Related Agency Appropriations Act, 2003 (Public Law 108 - 7), we are notifying you that the United States intends to support, in September, a resolution in the UN Security Council creating a UN Mission Liberia, UNMIL, as of October 1, 2003. The new mission will be tasked with supporting and monitoring the ceasefire agreement in Liberia and supporting the National Transitional Government of Liberia under the direction of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General designed to culminate in free and fair elections and installation of a new Liberian government by January 2006. The Secretary-General will recommend Security Council authorization for 15,000 troops, 250 military observers and 900 armed civilian police officers to carry out this task.

Creation of this new force was anticipated by UNSCR 1497 of August 1, 2003 to succeed the ECOMIL multinational force provided by the Economic Organization of West African States (ECOWAS), which has been present in Liberia since August 4. The departure of President Taylor, as sought by ECOWAS and by the United States, on August 11, has facilitated the task, but two large rebel forces are respecting a very tenuous ceasefire, and the arrival of a significant stabilization force at this time will hopefully consolidate the peace.

Sincerely,

Paul V. Kelly
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosure:

Establishing UN Peacekeeping Operation for Liberia

The Honorable

Duncan Hunter, Chairman,
Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives.

Establishing a UN Peacekeeping Operation for Liberia

Security Council Resolution 1497 of 1 August 2003 declared the intention of the Council to establish, as of 1 October 2003, a UN stabilization force to support a transitional, post-Taylor Liberian government and to assist in the implementation of a comprehensive peace agreement for Liberia. The UN force is to follow on and relieve the multinational peacekeeping efforts of the Economic Organization of West African States, ECOWAS, and its peacekeeping force, ECOMIL.

The Secretary-General was asked in Resolution 1497 to submit recommendations to the Council concerning the size, structure and mandate of the new UN force, which will be styled the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

The United States plans to vote in favor of establishing UNMIL when a resolution to do so comes before the Security Council in September.

Background

Liberia has unique historical ties to the United States in that it was founded by freed American slaves, the first of whom settled there in 1820. Descendents of those founders of Liberia today number only about five percent of the estimated population of 3.1 million. Fifteen indigenous African ethnic groups, and Lebanese, Indian and West African businesspeople account for the remainder of the population.

From the establishment of a Liberian state in 1847 until a coup d'etat by Army Sergeant Samuel Doe in 1980, Liberia was a largely peaceful state under one-party rule. Doe's Krahn ethnic group dominated Liberia through most of the 1980's. Doe's increasingly repressive government was challenged by several armed factions including Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front, and Doe's government fell in 1990. The organization of West African States, ECOWAS, intervened and prevented Taylor from seizing Monrovia, the capital, and formed an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). Taylor refused to work with IGNU and continued the civil war. By 1992 several warring factions had emerged in the Liberian civil war. A series of ephemeral peace accords were signed and ignored in the

years that followed, until a modicum of peace was reached in 1996.

After considerable progress in negotiations encouraged by the United States, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) and ECOWAS, and elections were held on 19 July 1997. Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party emerging victorious. Taylor won the elections by a large majority, primarily because Liberians feared a return to civil war if Taylor lost.

The UN was involved in Liberia at the behest of the Security Council in the mid to late 1990s through the presence of the UN Observer Mission for Liberia (UNOMIL) and later through the UN Peace-Building Support Office in Liberia (UNOL). Both were hampered by the inability of the Taylor government and the opposition (later rebels) to resolve their differences over power sharing. Planned disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of rebel forces did not take place satisfactorily.

Taylor's rule from 1996 until he left office on 11 August 2003 was characterized by the use of intimidation, patronage and corruption to maintain power. The legislature exercised little influence and the judiciary was subject to political influence, economic pressure and corruption.

By 1999, in response to a Liberian military incursion into neighboring Guinea, a new rebel group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), began to launch attacks on Taylor's forces from Guinea. After Taylor's troops attacked Liberians in western Cote d'Ivoire, yet another group, Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), soon began to attack Taylor from that country. By mid-2003 these two insurgent groups controlled most of the country's territory and were closing on Monrovia.

Early in 2003, the U.S., the UN, the African Union, ECOWAS and the government of Ghana sought to achieve a negotiated solution between the Liberian government and the insurgent groups through peace talks in Accra, Ghana, which culminated in the signing of a ceasefire agreement, which was respected only in the breach.

The 4 June public announcement of the indictment of President Taylor by the Sierra Leone Special Court for Taylor's support of the RUF rebel movement in Sierra Leone and complicity in that group's horrific war crimes served to underscore the precariousness of Liberian governmental institutions and of Taylor's position. ECOWAS heads of state called for his departure in accordance with the June ceasefire agreement. In response to intense international pressure, including public statements by President Bush and his dispatch of a U.S. Amphibious Ready Group towards Liberia, Charles Taylor turned over the Presidency to Vice President Blah on 11 August, and departed for Nigeria, where he remains. A comprehensive peace agreement was signed August 18, and an interim government has been established.

The first elements of an ECOWAS force called ECOMIL entered Liberia 4 August in accordance with the mandates of ECOWAS and UNSCR 1497. The American Amphibious Ready Group remains offshore in a supporting position and some 59 American Marines from that force are currently in and around Monrovia, in support of ECOMIL operations. Another 87 U.S. military are providing protection for the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia.

The entry of the ECOMIL force was with the clear understanding that it was to be succeeded by a UN force as of 1 October. It is anticipated that most ECOMIL troops on the ground in Liberia as of 1 October will be absorbed into UNMIL.

U.S. National Interests

The U.S. has a national interest in regional stability and in building international relationships and institutions that can work to defuse regional conflicts such as that which has embroiled Liberia and its neighbors, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. We have a national interest in facilitating security cooperation among West African nations through ECOWAS/ECOMIL and among the international community at large, through the UN, to deal effectively with the threat of continued instability in Liberia and the region.

Moreover, in the face of the violence that has afflicted the faltering state of Liberia, The U.S. has a national interest in both alleviating suffering and in

restoring internal and regional stability. The successive crises in Liberia have made some 300,000 Liberians into refugees and another 500,000 are internally displaced within its borders.

It is also in our interest, as well as that of Liberians, for Liberia to return to a measure of the stability which it enjoyed for over a century before 1980 for their own well-being as well as to prevent the country from becoming an ungoverned haven of criminality and terrorism.

Mandate, Forces, Command and Control

We will support a UN resolution establishing a UN peacekeeping operation for Liberia including troops, military observers, civilian police, and a civilian component under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to include the following tasks:

- supporting implementation of the August 18 peace agreement,
- monitoring the ceasefire,
- ensuring the freedom of movement of UN personnel,
- facilitating the free movement of people humanitarian assistance and goods throughout Liberia,
- protecting civilians under imminent threat,
- providing training and assistance for Liberian police, law enforcement and legal institutions,
- providing advice and support to the interim government of Liberia on the formation of a new national military,
- assisting the interim government of Liberia in disarmament and demobilization,
- guarding and disposing of weaponry and ammunition of ex-combatants,
- assisting the interim government of Liberia in extending its authority throughout Liberia,

- providing advice, assistance, and training to the interim government and assisting it in preparing for elections,

- monitoring human rights and provide training in the field.

To carry out the above tasks, we anticipate that the Secretary-General will request the Security Council authorize a force of 15,000 peacekeeping troops, 250 military observers and up to 900 armed civilian police officers together with a significant civilian component and necessary support staff. It will be commanded by a three-star general. The UN force anticipated for Liberia will report through its commander to the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Jacques-Paul Klein, a retired American Foreign Service officer appointed by the Secretary-General on July 8. He will also have the overall coordination authority for all UN activities in Liberia.

The size of the force, while large, is commensurate with the task of stabilizing Liberia, and there is ample reason to authorize enough troops at the outset to accomplish the task. The counter-example to avoid is that of neighboring Sierra Leone in the year 2000, where there were too few troops, and they were ill-equipped and ill-trained for their task. Several hundred lightly armed UN troops were kidnapped by rebel forces there, sparking a lengthy crisis and embarrassment for the UN.

Duration and Exit Strategy

It is anticipated that the mandate of UNMIL would end with the holding of free and fair elections in 2005 and the installation of a democratically elected government in January 2006. We anticipate that UNMIL, once set up, will prepare precise and realistic benchmarks for progress toward this exit strategy.

Estimated Costs

We do not have budget estimates from the UN on the annual UN assessed costs to the U.S. for this new mission in Liberia. In lieu of such estimates, we estimate that once the operation is underway the U.S. share of operating costs for twelve months could be in the range of \$125 million to \$165 million, for which we would seek funding in FY 2005.

U.S. Military Functions in Support of UNMIL

The Amphibious Ready Group provided support to the ECOMIL deployment, including the temporary positioning of a quick reaction force at Roberts Field International Airport, deployment of liaison officers with the ECOMIL forces and provision of engineering support services at the port, airport and water treatment plant.

The UN has asked for two U.S. military officers and seven U.S. military observers to be assigned to UNMIL, and for several foreign service officers to be assigned to the UNMIL civilian staff. No decisions have been made on such assignments at this time.

The Department of State has provided assistance to ECOWAS member states including airlift, support, maintenance and equipment.